Ehrengard, Kierkegaard, and the Secret Note

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"Ehrengard," Kierkegaard, and the Secret Note

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INTRODUCTION

The novella "Ehrengard" from 1963 has commonly been regarded, and rightly so, as Karen Blixen's (Isak Dinesen's) answer to Søren Kierkegaard's "Forførerens Dagbog" from *Enten-Eller. Første Deel* (1843) (1987; "The Seducer's Diary" in *Either/Or*. Part I). Shortly after the publication, Robert Langbaum was the first scholar to point out the connections between "Ehrengard" and "Forførerens Dagbog" in his book *The Gayety of Vision* (1964). Since the publication of this work, at least twenty articles or separate book chapters discussing the novella in various ways have been published, for the most part focusing on the notion of gender, art, and seduction.[1] A visit to the Royal Danish Library (December 2010), where seven different manuscript versions of the novella are to be found in the Karen Blixen archive, confirmed that even though "Ehrengard" has received renewed scholarly attention in the past ten years,[2] important information crucial to our understanding of the novella has so far been overlooked. In this paper I will focus on the following in order to renew and enrich our understanding of this significant work by

1. In addition to the works mentioned by Ivan Ž. Sørensen in his small bibliography containing articles and chapters about "Ehrengard" in Sørensen (2002, 190–3), we can add Timm Knudsen (1992); Gemal (1999); Paahus (2001); Brantly (2002); Mieszkowski (2003); Møller (2005); Rosdahl and Sørensen (2011); and Kondrup (2011).
2. Mieszkowski (2003); Rosdahl and Sørensen (2011); and Kondrup (2011).

Blixen: (1) I will point out new meta-narrative connections to "The Seducer's Diary" significant for the interpretation and understanding of the narrative, (2) I will show how deleted passages in the earlier drafts carry new information crucial for our understanding of J. W. Cazotte's blush in the final scene, and (3) I will show how hidden homophonic puns add to the understanding of the novella as a comedy and connect it to Kierkegaard in new ways.

"EHRENGARD"

Already as early as the middle of the 1920s, Blixen expressed her interest in Kierkegaard in various letters from Africa. The most elaborate passage we find in a letter from August 3, 1924, to her brother Thomas Dinesen:

> Læs forresten ogsaa Søren Kierkegaard, selv om Du maaske vil synes han er lidt indviklet (maaske ogsaa lidt gammeldags for Dig!) Vi har i hvert Fald "Enten-Eller" hjemme. Jeg tror ikke, at noget Menneske kan læse ham med Eftertanke uden at gribes af ham. Han var etærligt Menneske og led under det; maaske vil Du i hans "Opfattelse" af "Den Enkelte" finde noget af dig selv. (Blixen 1979a, 280)

> And by the way, read Søren Kierkegaard, too, even though you may find him a little complicated (he may be a little old-fashioned to you, too!); I know that we have "Either/Or" at home, anyway. I do not think that anyone can read him closely without being gripped by him. He was an honest person and suffered for it; you may perhaps see something of yourself in his concept of "The Individual." (Dinesen 1978, 225–6)

Later, in 1926–27, after a yearlong trip to Denmark in 1925 where she met Georg Brandes on two occasions in October (Bunch 2011, 77), and during a turbulent time in her relationship with Denys Finch Hatton, Karen Blixen started working on her writing with much more focus and ambition. She wrote the first draft of "Carnival" in Africa during these years. The tale is about a supper party in a house north of Copenhagen in 1925 after a great masked ball has taken place. At the supper party we find one of the female characters, Annelise, dressed as "the young Søren Kierkegaard," and the plot of Kierkegaard's "Forførerens Dagbog" plays a significant role in the tale. Here Annelise plays the role of the seducer, when she is trying to create a new version of the seduction plot in "Forførerens Dagbog" with her lover Tido.[3]

3. The tale and the relation to Kierkegaard have been thoroughly treated by Bunch (2011).

"Carnival" was eventually stored away and not published until 1975 in Clara Selborn's Danish translation and two years later in the original English version (1977). Blixen, however, never gave up on her interest in Kierkegaard, and "Forførerens Dagbog" in particular, and in the early 1950s she decided to develop a full-length tale based on this work, drawing in part of some of the ideas from "Carnival." The tale, or the novella as I will refer to it in this paper, was titled "Ehrengard."

The process from the first draft written in the late winter and spring of 1952 to the final manuscript, which was published posthumously in 1963, was long and challenging. In April and May of 1952, while working on the first draft, Blixen and her secretary Clara Selborn had problems collaborating. Selborn did not like the novella and was not able to hide her disapproval when she took dictation (Selborn 1974, 77). Selborn, who was a Catholic, had problems with the humorous sexual content in the novella and felt that Blixen went too far. This made Blixen furious (Selborn 1974, 83). The outcome of their dispute was that Blixen sent Selborn on a mandatory leave to France and Italy in May 1952, so she could continue working on "Ehrengard" alone without Selborn meddling (Selborn 1974, 76–7; Blixen 1996, Vol. II, 85–7). In the summer and fall of 1952, she sent the first draft to Erik Clemmesen (he answered July 14) and Ellen Dahl (she answered July 18) for comments, and later in the fall, to Jørgen Gustava Brandt (he answered October 10) (Blixen 1996, Vol. II, 92–6). They were all very appreciative, and her sister, Ellen Dahl, who was one of Blixen's preferred readers and critics, even went as far as to call it "en storartet Historie, ja, at den egentlig er, som Liddas Cyclekørsel, da hun tog Undervisning hos en Professional: 'Næsten fuldkommens' (Blixen 1996, Vol. II, 94) [a splendid story, yes, it is in fact, like Lidda's biking, when she was taught by a professional: "almost perfect"[4]]. Blixen was, however, not satisfied with the story and stored it away, even though the responses from the three readers were unanimously positive. Nine years later she took it up again and rewrote it several times in 1961 and 1962, until she finally submitted it to the *Ladies' Home Journal* in June 1962 (Langbaum 1964, 274). The journal, however, thought that the novella was too long for a magazine story and asked for the number of pages to be significantly reduced. This was very hard for Karen Blixen to accept after having worked on it for more than ten years. She mentioned that it felt to her "som at skære i mit hjerte"

4. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

(Lasson 2008, 481) [like cutting my heart], but she needed the money and had to accept the changes. The shortened version was published in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in December 1962, under the title "The Secret of Rosenbad" just a few months after Blixen died (Langbaum 1964, 274). The year after, in 1963, "Ehrengard" was published in full length in both the original English version and in Clara Selborn's Danish translation. The narrative complexity, the subtle intrigue, and the profound insights into the anatomy of art and seduction are products of this long and complex process through which it came into being. The end result is a novella of great depth and complexity.

JOHANN W. CAZOTTE AND JOHANNES FORFØREREN

The male protagonist in "Ehrengard" is a composite of three characters, but only two of them will be included in this examination of the novella.[5] As the name suggests, the character of Johann Wolfgang Cazotte is based on German writer and painter Johann Wolfgang Goethe: "that great artist Geheimrat Wolfgang Cazotte" (Dinesen 1993b, 218). The character in the tale is well aware of the name similarity: "The world did not grudge sweet Gretchen—the heroine of my gigantic namesake—her guilt, it admitted her crime of infanticide and her debt to the sword of justice" (Dinesen 1993b, 245). The depiction of the psychological makeup of Johann W. Cazotte is, however, closer to Søren Kierkegaard's character Johannes Forføreren from "Forførerens Dagbog" (1843). They have very similar names (Johann and Johannes), and Johann W. Cazotte's approach to seduction closely follows what Johannes Forføreren expresses in "Forførerens Dagbog." As readers, we do not know much about Johannes Forføreren, only that he is some kind of intellectual and a devotee of living aesthetically. He is a seducer, but not in an ordinary sense, as A correctly notices in the foreword: "Han levede altfor meget aandeligt til at være en Forfører i almindelig Forstand" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["He lived much too intellectually to be a seducer in the ordinary sense" (Kierkegaard 1987, 307)], and this

5. The third character is French writer and occultist Jaques Cazotte, who was beheaded during the French Revolution in 1792 on the part of his counter-revolutionary letters. His most popular work, *Le Diable amoureux* [The Devil in Love] from 1772, was highly appreciated by Blixen. The role this work plays in connection to "Ehrengard" has been thoroughly examined by Sørensen (2002, 143–5).

passage in the diary explains why: "Det er mig slet ikke om at gjøre i udvortes Forstand at besidde Pigen, men kunstnerisk at nyde Hende" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["I do not care at all to possess the girl in the external sense but wish to enjoy her artistically" (Kierkegaard 1987, 372)].

Blixen elaborates on this connection between art and seduction in "Ehrengard" in the letters Johann W. Cazotte writes to his confidante and former beneficiary Countess von Gassner (this character is the novella's equivalent to Goethe's Charlotte von Stein). Through the voice of Johann W. Cazotte, Blixen implicitly answers the question Johannes Forføreren poses in "Forførerens Dagbog," but never answers himself: "Men hvor træffer man slige systematiske Forførere, hvor slige Psychologer" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["But where does one meet such systematic seducers, such psychologists?" (Kierkegaard 1987, 363)]. The answer in "Ehrengard" is, of course, the artist:

> *You call an artist a seducer and are not aware that you are paying him the highest of compliments. The whole attitude of the artist towards the Universe is that of a seducer. For what does seduction mean but the ability to make, with infinite trouble, patience and perseverance, the object upon which you concentrate your mind give forth, voluntarily and enraptured, its very core and essence?* (Dinesen 1993b, 219; emphasis in original)

The juxtaposition between seduction and art, seducer and artist, Johannes and Johann, is a dominant structure that runs all through the novella. Both Johann and Johannes see the whole process of seducing a young girl first and foremost as a process of personal inspiration and artistic stimulation. As the narrator describes Johann W. Cazotte: "The course of things was inspiring, and of all things in the world Herr Cazotte really with his whole heart wanted only one: inspiration" (Dinesen 1993b, 266), and as A notes about Johannes in the preface to "Forførerens Dagbog": "Individerne have for ham blot været Incitament, han kastede dem af sig, ligesom Træerne ryste Blade af—han foryngedes, Løvet visnede" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["For him individuals were merely for stimulation; he discarded them as trees shake off their leaves—he was rejuvenated, the foliage withered" (Kierkegaard 1987, 308)]. Aside from the personal stimulation and inspiration the seduction process brings them, Johann and Johannes are also addicted to the intoxicating feeling of omnipotence that emerges from being a sovereign creator, that being of a seduction story with a young girl or the creator of a work of art: "Jeg er beruset ved Tanken om, at hun er i min Magt" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["I am

intoxicated with the thought that she is in my power" (Kierkegaard 1987, 377)]. Johann W. Cazotte: "He is at this moment an artist absorbed in and intoxicated by the creation of his chef d'oeuvre. Food and rest are nothing to him, he is fed by winged inspiration" (Dinesen 1993b, 244). In *Skygger paa Græsset* (Blixen 1960; *Shadows on the Grass* [1984]), Blixen compares the hunter with the seducer and mentions that she has often thought of "Forførerens Dagbog" when experiencing the exhilarating feeling of omnipotence during the hunt, most apparent in the Danish version:

> Jægeren maa tænke sig om og holde sig Vind- og Terrænforhold for Øje, falde ind i Landskabet og gøre sig lydløs som Vildtet selv. Det er en henrykkende Idræt, som kalder paa alle Evner i Jægeren og skænker Øjeblikke af sød og storslaaet Selvfølelse. Jeg har paa Jagt husket Situationer og Stemninger fra "Forførerens Dagbog". Dog er denne Jagt efter det flygtende Vildt aldrig la vraie chose [but the seduction of a young girl is]. (Blixen 1960, 58)

> The hunter must take wind and terrain into account and sneak close to them slowly and silently without their realizing the danger. It is a fine and fascinating art, in the spirit of that masterpiece of my countryman Sören (sic!) Kierkegaard, The Seducer's Diary, and it may, in the same way, provide the hunter with moments of great drama and with opportunity for skill and cunning, and for self-gratulations. (Dinesen 1984, 45)

Johann and Johannes also agree that one must break off the relationship as soon as the desired reaction, the object's complete fall into surrender and devotion, has been achieved. Johannes: "Naar en Pige først har hengivet sig aldeles, saa er det Hele forbi" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["As soon as a girl has devoted herself completely, the whole thing is finished" (Kierkegaard 1987, 435)]; and Johann W. Cazotte: "The honest and loyal seducer, when he has obtained the smile, the side glance, the waltz or the tears, will uncover his head to the lady, his heart filled with gratitude, and will be dreading only one thing: that he may ever meet her again" (Dinesen 1993b, 220). For Johann and Johannes the "breaking off" is the only way the love affair can be preserved as an infinite source of spiritual recollection and also the only way for them to keep full control over it, since they can recollect, shape, and narrate it as they please, without any interference from reality. If not broken off, the future fiancée or wife will have something to say too; compromises have to be made, reality takes over, and the omnipotent, spiritual aspect of the love affair is annulled.

LIFE VERSUS ART

Even though Johannes and Johann are similar in many ways, we do find a couple of fundamental differences. Johannes's mission in life is to *live artistically*, whereas Johann's mission is to *be an artist*. Johannes wants to *live poetically*, in the moment, in full presence and enjoyment: "Hans Liv har været et Forsøg paa at realisere den Opgave at leve poetisk" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["His life has been an attempt to accomplish the task of living poetically" (Kierkegaard 1987, 304)]. Conversely, Johann wants to *create art* that is infinite and immortal. Johannes shapes, stages, and creates poetic situations in life with his intellectual power and ability to manipulate and seduce. This makes Johannes a *poet of life*, but not a poet or an artist, since the diary is strictly reserved for his private observations. As the narrator A correctly observes in the preface with regard to the diary: "[A]t den i strængeste Forstand blot har havt personlig Betydning for ham, er iøinefaldende; og at ville antage, at jeg har et Digterværk for mig, maaskee endog bestemt til at trykkes, forbyder saavel det Hele som det Enkelte" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["(I)t is obvious that in the strictest sense it had only personal importance for him, and to assume that I have before me a poetic work, perhaps even intended for publication, is excluded by the whole as well as by its parts" (Kierkegaard 1987, 305)].[6] In "Forførerens Dagbog," Johannes proudly proclaims that "Hendes Udvikling det var mit Værk" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["Her development—that was my work" (Kierkegaard 1987, 445)], but this *work of life* of his, Cordelia and her love, will die (and so will he) and the infinite aspect of their love will eventually be annulled. Johann, on the contrary, artist that he is, is obsessed with the idea of eternity. His main aim is to immortalize his relationship with Ehrengard in a work of art:

> In what possible way could he more fully and thoroughly make the

6. The author Søren Kierkegaard, of course, meant "The Seducer's Diary" to be "a poetic work . . . intended for publication," so this passage could be read as authorial irony, since Kierkegaard himself was very well aware of the immortal aspect of art. But here we have to differentiate between his fictional character, Johannes (that might also very well have been created as a fictional character by A, even though he claims otherwise), and the author, Søren Kierkegaard. In "Ehrengard," Blixen is primarily interested in interpreting *the character of Johannes* in connection to her own character Johann W. Cazotte. And the character Johannes seems to have no intention of having his diary published as a work of art.

> girl his own than by capturing, fastening and fixing upon his canvas every line and hue of her young body . . . and immortalizing it, so that nobody in the world could ever again separate the two of them. It would be, unmistakably and for all eternity, Ehrengard, the maid from the mountains, and it would be, unmistakably and for all eternity, a Cazotte. In the picture the face of the bather would be turned away. By no means would he betray or give away his maid-of-honor. He might show his masterpiece to Princes and Princesses, art critics and enraptured lookers-on, and the girl herself at the same moment, and no one but he and she would know the truth. (Dinesen 1993b, 251)

PHYSICAL VERSUS SPIRITUAL SEDUCTION

Another fundamental difference exists between Johann and Johannes, which is probably also the most important one. It concerns the nature of the seduction. Contrary to Johannes, Johann W. Cazotte intends to carry out his final seduction of Ehrengard exclusively as a spiritual seduction, and not an actual physical one involving sexual intercourse. He explains why, in this passage:

> I might, upon your friendly advice, undertake to seduce the girl in the orthodox and old-fashioned manner, and the task might not be as difficult as it looks. . . . I might seduce her, for she is impulsive and unreflecting, in a particularly impetuous moment of hers. And, Madame, it would mean nothing. *For her ruin in such a case, would be fact and reality.* (Dinesen 1993b, 244; emphasis added)

Johann W. Cazotte continues and imagines the implications of this type of spiritual seduction of Ehrengard:

> Alas, Madame, she will not catch me up, for I shall be away painting other fair ladies, having handed her over, intact but annihilated, to the fond cares of a young husband who will never have the faintest notion that he is drinking up my remains. And will not then, you ask me, her ruin be a fact and a reality? Verily, my friend, it will be so, inasmuch as the reality of art be superior to that of the material world. Inasmuch as the artist be, everywhere and at all times, the arbiter of reality. (Dinesen 1993b, 246)

Blixen is here delivering a clever response to Kierkegaard's plot in "Forførerens Dagbog" with regard to the humiliating situation in which Johannes eventually leaves Cordelia. After their pre-marital sexual intercourse, Johannes abandons Cordelia for good. He leaves her a

fallen woman, and from an 1840s societal point of view, her life is, in fact, forever ruined. Thus, in Blixen's eyes, Johannes has deceived his own idea of having created "et skjønnere og betydningsfuldere Forhold til Cordelia" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["a more beautiful and significant relationship to Cordelia" (Kierkegaard 1987, 376)]. In "Forførerens Dagbog," Cordelia's ruin is "fact and reality," which is exactly what Johann W. Cazotte wants to avoid in his dealings with Ehrengard. This is Blixen's deliberate critique of the character Johannes in "Forførerens Dagbog" and also the background for one of the major changes she makes in her version of the story, namely that Johann W. Cazotte will seduce Ehrengard only insofar as he is not compromising her virginal honor and social position: "I insist on obtaining full surrender without any physical touch" (Dinesen 1993b, 244). This means that Cazotte will leave Ehrengard "intact" from a societal point of view, even though he does succeed in annihilating her on a private and spiritual level. This is also a significant blow to the guarantee Johannes issues in "Forførerens Dagbog": "Overhovedet kan jeg tilsikkre enhver Pige, der vil betroe sig til mig, en fuldkommen æsthetisk Behandling" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["I can guarantee perfect esthetic treatment to any girl who entrusts herself to me" (Kierkegaard 1987, 380)]. Blixen's "Ehrengard" thus becomes the *true version* of how to apply "perfect esthetic treatment" in the discipline of seducing a young girl. This inversion of the seduction strategy and its implications stand out as a prominent and significant meta-narrative counter-comment to "Forførerens Dagbog."

CORDELIA VERSUS EHRENGARD

Blixen also thought that the character of Cordelia was too simple and one-sided and that Kierkegaard's "Forførerens Dagbog" underestimates the female intellect and a young woman's ability to understand men and the subtle game of love and seduction. This point of view is expressed by Lincoln Forsner in "The Dreamers" (Dinesen, 2002) where he states that a woman in a love affair is very well aware of her seducer's intention and in the end is the one who is deciding whether her seducer is going to be successful or not: "The ladies *who have done me the honour of letting me seduce them* have, all of them, insisted upon deciding themselves which was the central point in the picture" (Dinesen 2002, 256; emphasis added). We also find Cordelia's point of view to be almost absent in the story. The only passages representing

her point of view are the two short letters to Johannes we find in the foreword.[7] Here we, surprisingly, discover that she is still hopelessly in love with him, even though he has annihilated her and left her a social outcast. Cordelia's one-sided role in the story has implications for Blixen's view on Johannes, as she expresses in this letter to Aage Henriksen on October 14, 1954: "[H]vis hun ikke er et Menneske, da er han hellerikke noget Menneske, hvis hun ikke er en Heltinde i en Historie, da er han hellerikke nogen Helt" (Blixen 1996, Vol. I, 251) [(I)f she is not a human being then he is not a human being either, if she is not a heroine in a story, he too is not a hero]. In "Ehrengard," Blixen creates a scenario that follows a more equal situation when she gives Ehrengard a voice and an intellect of her own (as outlined in the above passage). She basically grants Johann W. Cazotte what Victor Eremita in the foreword to *Enten-Eller. Første Deel* thinks would be Johannes the Seducer's wish, if he had known about the publication of "Forførerens Dagbog":

> Giv mig et halvt Aar, og jeg tilveiebringer en Historie, der skal være interessantere end Alt hvad jeg hidtil har oplevet. Jeg tænker mig en ung, kraftfuld, genial Pige faae den ualmindelige Idee at ville hævne Kjønnet paa mig. Hun mener at skulle kunne tvinge mig, at lade mig smage ulykkelig Kjærligheds Smerter. See det er en Pige for mig. Hitter hun ikke selv dybt nok derpaa, saa skal jeg komme hende til Hjælp. Jeg skal vride mig som Molboernes Aal. Og naar jeg da har bragt hende paa det Punkt, jeg vil, saa er hun min.
>
> Give me half a year, and I will produce a story that will be ever so much more interesting than everything I have so far experienced. I picture to myself a young, energetic girl of genius having the extraordinary idea of wanting to avenge her sex on me. She thinks she will be able to coerce me, to make me taste the pains of unhappy love. That, you see, is a girl for me. If she herself does not think of it profoundly enough, I shall come to her assistance. I shall writhe like the Molbo's eel. And when I have brought her to the point where I want her, then she is mine. (Kierkegaard 1987, 9–10)

This meta-narrative connection has already been pointed out by Selboe (1996, 145–6) and Kondrup (2011, 90), but this re-match between Johannes and Cordelia in "Ehrengard," I will argue, ends in a tie and not with Ehrengard's triumph and Johann W. Cazotte's demise, as previous scholars have so far agreed upon (I will get back to that later).

7. These two letters from Cordelia are the only examples in Kierkegaard's entire production where a female character is granted her own point of view (!).

JOHANN W. CAZOTTE AS THE PUPPET MASTER

In "Forførerens Dagbog," Johannes develops a master plan for the seduction of Cordelia that he follows meticulously and succeeds in realizing without any missteps. In "Ehrengard," we slowly discover that Johann Cazotte's plan to seduce Ehrengard was, in fact, also in place from the very beginning of the narrative. When unraveling the plot, it becomes clear that Johann, meticulously as a chess player and with the strategic skills of a Napoleon, has been the master puppeteer of the whole affair: Lothar's falling in love with Ludmilla and their pre-marital physical love-relationship have just been a firing ramp for Johann W. Cazotte to launch the setup at Schloss Rosenbad and involve Ehrengard as Ludmilla's maid-of-honor (also pointed out by Heede 2001, 88; and Sørensen 2002, 120). Up until his first meeting with Ehrengard at the Leda Fountain, Johann has cleverly managed to put himself in a position where he has been able to direct and manipulate the course of events. The key passage revealing that Johann W. Cazotte has had his eyes on Ehrengard, and a desire to seduce her long before he brings Lothar to the court of Leuchtenstein to fall in love with Ludmilla, is first disclosed well into the story:

> I saw, at a court ball, a girl in a white frock, the daughter of warriors, in whose universe art, or the artist, have never existed. And I cried with Michelangelo: "My greatest triumph hides within that block of marble." Since then I have at times ventured to believe that it be this vision of mine which has caused our entire course of events, and has, in the end, lifted my young eaglet off her native mountain peak to drop her in the flower Garden of Rosenbad. (Dinesen 1993b, 232–3)

Other crucial passages in the novella support this interpretation of Johann W. Cazotte as being responsible for the whole chain of events: "Herr Cazotte from the beginning had had his eyes on a particular court. . . . He led his steps, and those of Prince Lothar, to Leuchtenstein" (Dinesen 1993b, 222); "He developed to the Grand Duchess a plan, which, although it must have been conceived on the spot, seemed well thought through" (Dinesen 1993b, 225); "The choice of residence itself was entrusted to Herr Cazotte" (Dinesen 1993b, 227); and finally: "A problem presented itself with the nomination of a maid-of-honor to the Princess. . . . Herr Cazotte sat for some time in silence with a thoughtful face. Possibly he had already made his choice, but was taking pleasure in letting the highborn maidens of Babenhausen pass muster before his inner eye" (Dinesen 1993b, 227–8). Johann W. Cazotte's

relationship to the Grand Duchess and his ability to manipulate her is similar to the way Johannes manages to manipulate Cordelia's aunt in "Forførerens Dagbog," which eventually clears the way for her to give him her consent to his engagement to Cordelia: "jeg gjør ingen Hemmelighed af mine Udgydelser for Tanten, Torvepriser, en Beregning over, hvor mange Potter Mælk der skal til eet Pund Smør, igjennem Flødens Medium og Smørkjernens Dialektik. . . . jeg sværmer med Tanten" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["I make no secret of my effusions to the aunt—market prices, an estimate of how many quarts milk it takes for one pound of butter through the medium of cream and the dialectic of the butter churn. . . . I romance with the aunt" (Kierkegaard 1987, 349–50)]; and "Tanten overbyder sig selv ved min kraftige Bistand i denne Retning. Hun er næsten bleven fanatisk, Noget, hun da kan takke mig for" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["With my powerful assistance on this score, the aunt is outdoing herself. She has become almost a fanatic—something she can thank me for" (Kierkegaard 1987, 353)]. Johann W. Cazotte is equally capable of manipulating the Grand Duchess in order to get what he wants: "The slightest of hints was sufficient, the painter read the Grand Ducal mind like a book, and like an Aeolian harp responded to its inaudible sigh" (Dinesen 1993b, 221). We see from Johann W. Cazotte's role in the narrative that the only step with regard to the seduction of Ehrengard that was *not* planned in detail before he arranged the affair between Lothar and Ludmilla was the actual seduction method (the nude painting), but the idea of the outcome—the blush—was there from the very beginning.

THE SEDUCTION SETUP AND THE BLUSH

The surroundings and the setup for Johann W. Cazotte's spiritual seduction of the young virgin Ehrengard follow the basic ideas of Johannes Forføreren, when he meticulously prepares the love nest for the final seduction of Cordelia in "Forførerens Dagbog":

> Intet er glemt, der kunde have nogen Betydning for hende, og derimod er der Intet anbragt, der slet og ret kunde erindre om mig; medens jeg dog overalt er usynligt tilstede. . . . Beliggenheden er som hun kunde ønske sig den. . . . Illusionen er fuldstændig. (Kierkegaard 1843)
>
> Nothing has been forgotten that could have any significance for her; on the other hand, nothing has been forgotten that could directly remind her of me, although I am nevertheless invisibly present everywhere. . . . The location is just as she would like it. . . . The illusion is perfect. (Kierkegaard 1987, 442–3)

Johann W. Cazotte uses a similar strategy when he decorates his love nest "Schloss Rosenbad":

> You may mount the stairs at liberty and walk undisturbed from room to room: an artist and poet, you will then admit, has gone through the house before you and has made it speak. . . . Look up and down, right and left, with your most critical eye—you will not find a single tone which be not harmoniously tuned into the harmony of the whole. (Dinesen 1993b, 231)

Until Johann W. Cazotte discovers that Ehrengard swims naked in a nearby lake every morning, it has been unclear to himself—as well as the reader—how he would actually execute the final seduction. So far he has only contrived the desired outcome of the seduction: Ehrengard's final and fatal "blush," but he has so far been unable to come up with an actual method to provoke it. After seeing her naked at the lake, a diabolic plan finally emerges. From a hiding place on the bank, he will paint Ehrengard when she is taking her morning bath, and when the work is finished, he will show the painting to her in order to trigger the desired reaction:

> Her mind never worked quickly, it would take her two or three minutes to grasp her position. Three facts she would at the end of them have made her own. That she was beautiful. That she was naked—and already in the third chapter of Genesis such a recognition is reported to be fatal. And, lastly, that in being thus beautiful and naked she had given herself over to the Venusberg. And to him . . . her blood is to rise, in pride and amour-propre, in unconditional surrender to those perils, in the enraptured flinging over of her entire being to the powers which, till this hour, with her entire being she has rejected and denied, in full, triumphant consent to her own perdition. In this blush her past, present, and future will be thrown before my feet. (Dinesen 1993b, 234, 252)

When seeing the painting, Ehrengard will understand that Johann W. Cazotte has enjoyed her many mornings, and she will never be able to tell anybody. The painting will be admired at the courts of Europe, but Ehrengard's face will not be visible: "In the picture the face of the bather will be turned away. By no means would he betray or give away his maid-of-honor" (Dinesen 1993b, 251). Since Ehrengard cannot be recognized, she will keep her social honor, but through self-reflection, she will discover sexuality (her naked body as a desirable sexual object),

love (in the deep and secret connection with Johann W. Cazotte), and eternity (the immortal artwork by the famous Johann W. Cazotte) in one and the same moment, and in the blush, she will throw her past (her as a naïve being, a spiritual virgin, so to speak), her present (her fall into reflection and self-consciousness), and future (her new level of consciousness and the infinite implications of the painting) before his feet. He and she will forever be united in this secret spiritual—yet highly erotic—relation, and no matter whom Ehrengard will marry later in life, her husband will forever be a spiritual cuckold, since she will never be able to tell him about the painting and the piquant, pre-marital affair with Johann W. Cazotte. Contrary to Johannes's "priceless" and "delicate" blush in "Forførerens Dagbog":

> Der er forskjellige Arter af qvindelig Rødme. Der er den grove Rødsteens-Rødme. Det er den, Romanskriverne altid have nok af, naar de lader deres Heltinder rødme über und über. Der er den fine Rødme; det er Aandens Morgenrøde. Hos en ung Pige er den ubetalelig. (Kierkegaard 1843)
>
> There are various kinds of womanly blushes. There is the dense brick-red blush. This is the one novelists always have in good supply when they have their heroines blush *über und über*. There is the delicate blush; it is the spirit's sunrise-red. In a young girl it is priceless. (Kierkegaard 1987, 364)

Johann W. Cazotte has another type of blush in mind for Ehrengard, which also counts in the aftermath of the spiritual fall, and here we arrive at another crucial difference. The type of blush Johann W. Cazotte wants to provoke in Ehrengard is not a delicate *sunrise*-red blush, but instead an intense and fatal *sunset*-red—a last desperate glow of daylight, whereupon black night will follow upon the recognition that she will forever be Johann W. Cazotte's bride in spirit. His example is the phenomenon of the "*Alpen-Glühen*":

> She is to be the rose which drops every one of her petals to one single breath of the wind and stands bared. In high mountains, as you will know, there is a phenomenon of nature called Alpen-Glühen. . . . After the sun has set, and as the whole majestic mountain landscape is already withdrawing into itself, suddenly the row of summits, all on their own, radiate a divine fire, a celestial, deep rose flame, as if they were giving up a long kept secret. After that they disappear, nothing more dramatic can be imagined: they have betrayed their inmost substance and can now only annihilate themselves. Black night follows . . . what void afterwards. (Dinesen 1993b, 234)

Again we see how Karen Blixen creates another astute meta-narrative counter comment to "Forførerens Dagbog." She develops the plot so it also counts in the tragic aftermath of the seduction, the spiritual fall, which is an element that is completely absent in "Forførerens Dagbog," where Johannes is only able to see Cordelia's fall as a positive development, since he is only able to evaluate it from an aesthetical point of view.

THE TURNING POINT: THE LEDA FOUNTAIN

Johann W. Cazotte never gets the final and fatal blush from Ehrengard that he had hoped for, but it is important to remember that Ehrengard actually *does* blush at their first meeting at the Leda fountain. The significance of this slight blush is, however, downplayed and obfuscated by the narrator, which makes it tempting for the reader, in accordance with Johann W. Cazotte, to misunderstand the situation:

> On a very lovely evening he had been reading to her in the garden and was slowly accompanying her back to the house, when he stopped and made her stop with him by a fountain representing Leda and the swan and repeated a stanza from the poem they had last read together. He was silent for a while, the girl was silent with him, and as he turned toward her he found her young face very still. "A penny for your thoughts, my Lady Ehrengard," he said. She looked at him, and for a moment a *very slight blush* slid over her face. "I was not," after a pause she answered him slowly and gravely, "really thinking of anything at all." He had no doubt that here, she was speaking the truth. (Blixen 1993b, 243; emphasis added)

The stanza that Johann W. Cazotte recites for Ehrengard must be the passage with Leda and the swan from Goethe's *Faust*, Part II (1832):

> Homunculus (*Astonished.*)
>
> Interesting!
>
> (*The phial slips out of Wagner's hands, hovers over Faust, and shines on him.*)
>
> Lovely surroundings!—Clear water
> In thick forest! Women there: undressing.
> The loveliest of all!—It's getting clearer.
> One's left, different from the rest, gleaming:
> Of highest race, for sure, a heavenly name.
> She places her foot in the transparent glow,

Her noble body's sweetly living flame
Cools itself in the yielding crystal flow.—
But what's that rush of beating wings for:
That thrashing, splashing, in the mirror?
The lovely girls, intimidated, flee:
Their queen, alone, looks on, composedly,
To see, with a proud feminine pleasure,
The Swan-Prince press against her knee, there,
Forward yet tame. Familiar, he seems.—
But suddenly a vapour heaves,
And covers, with the veil it weaves,
The loveliest of scenes.

(Goethe 1832)

Sørensen, however, relates the stanza that J. W. Cazotte is quoting to Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (Sørensen 2002, 131), but there are good reasons to believe that Blixen is instead aiming at the scene in Goethe's *Faust*, Part II. Firstly, *Faust* is written by Johan W. Cazotte's great "namesake" Johann W. Goethe, who is playing such a big part in the novella as a background figure. Secondly, the Leda and swan scene in *Faust* fit the scenery of Ehrengard's morning bath much better than the shorter and much less descriptive scene in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (quoted in Sørensen 2002, 132). Thirdly, the description of Leda in the passage from Goethe's *Faust* also fits with the ways Johann W. Cazotte describes Ehrengard elsewhere in the novella as a "white-hot young angel" of the highest race, stern and proud (Dinesen 1993b, 228–9). The purpose of reading the stanza is to see how Ehrengard responds to his quoting of this highly erotic passage from Goethe's poem that obviously put her in the role of Leda and him in the role as Zeus (the swan). To enhance the effect of his words, he does it in front of a fountain that is displaying the exact same scene. With this setup, Johann W. Cazotte hopes to provoke the crimson-red fatal blush that he has longed for so long, but when he asks Ehrengard about her thoughts, only "a very slight blush slid over her face" (Dinesen 1993b, 243). Shortly after she "slowly and gravely" claims that she was "really thinking of nothing at all," and Johann W. Cazotte believes her: "He had no doubt that here, as ever, she was speaking the truth" (Dinesen 1993b, 243). But Ehrengard is far less naïve than Johann thinks, and in this situation, she *does* actually see the connection between Leda (herself) and the swan (Cazotte) and what this connection implies. The "very slight blush" stems from the

fact that she is now aware that *this is the way Johann W. Cazotte is seeing* their relationship—not because she discovers her own sexuality, since "[s]he is a country-bred girl and familiar with the facts of life. She knows at what date after the wedding a child should be born" (Dinesen 1993b, 237). On the contrary, she blushes in discontent and anger, since she realizes that her friend and confidante, whom she up until now has perceived as a loyal father figure, is thinking about their relationship in a completely different way and has so far been doing everything he could to manipulate her. Ehrengard's newly gained knowledge is detrimental for Johann W. Cazotte's plan, since she is now aware that he has a hidden agenda, and this means that he will not be able to take her by surprise anymore. In fact she is turning against him from now on in an attempt to change the power dynamics and reverse the roles. When analyzing the events following this first meeting at the Leda fountain, it is striking that Johan W. Cazotte, only a few days after reciting the stanza to Ehrengard, finds her nude bathing at the lake in the forest, which is a repetition of the passage he just read to her. Thus, the morning bath sessions are the first step in the reversal of the roles and mark the beginning of Ehrengard's seduction of Johan W. Cazotte, even though he is completely unaware of it. This interpretation is supported by the following chain of events: The very same evening when Ehrengard's maid discovers Johan W. Cazotte at the lake (July 13), Ehrengard presents Lothar and Ludmilla's child to him, while looking him straight in the eyes. He avoids her gaze, completely unaware of the subtle subtext and continues to view Ehrengard as a work of art and not as young woman of flesh and blood:

> At her request Ehrengard lifted the basket and the child from the Princess' knee, and on her strong arms presented them to Herr Cazotte. The painter, still reluctant to look her in the face, let his eyes rest on the baby. But the pose of her figure recalled to him a group by the great sculptor Thorvaldsen, "Psyche selling amorini." (Dinesen 1993b, 256)

The very same evening they stroll in the garden with Countess Poggendorff, but when the Countess withdraws, Ehrengard deliberately stops at the Leda fountain to use it as a backdrop for their second meeting. Again Johan W. Cazotte underestimates her completely: "Herr Cazotte wondered whether Ehrengard, as upon an earlier evening, was thinking of nothing at all" (Dinesen 1993b, 257), but she is indeed thinking, and this is what she has prepared for him:

> As upon that earlier evening they passed the Leda fountain, Ehrengard slowed her steps, stopped and stood for a moment with the tips of her fingers in the clear water of the basin from which the breast and *the proud neck of the swan rose toward's* [sic] *Leda's knees.* As she lifted her head, turned and faced Herr Cazotte, she was a little pale, but she spoke in a clear voice. "My maid tells me," she said, "that you want to paint a picture. Out by the east of the house. I wish to tell you that I shall be there every morning, at six o'clock. (Dinesen 1993b, 257; emphasis added to underline the phallic symbolism of the sculpture)

In this scene, Ehrengard cleverly destroys Johann W. Cazotte's master plan. When she has the nerve and audacity to voluntarily invite him to come and paint her naked at the lake, he, of course, cannot expect her to blush when showing her the painting. Johan W. Cazotte, understandably, spends a sleepless and troubled night upon this disturbing second meeting that has forever ruined his plan. The day after, the small Prince is kidnapped from Schloss Rosenbad, and when the situation at the loft of Black Boar Inn develops, Ehrengard cleverly seizes the moment and teaches Cazotte the final lesson. Here she eventually succeeds in making Cazotte look at her as a sexual object of flesh and blood, when she announces their pre-marital sexual intercourse, which ultimately leads to his fall into physical sexuality. This has been Ehrengard's plan since their first Leda fountain meeting, without Cazotte having had the faintest idea of it.

NEMESIS STRIKES

As A writes about Johannes in the preface to "Forførerens Dagbog":

> Som han har ledet Andre vild, saa tænker jeg, han ender med selv med at løbe vild. De Andre har han ledet vild ikke i udvortes Henseende, men i indvortes dem selv betræffende. . . . Saaledes tænker jeg det vil gaae ham selv efter en endnu langt forfærdeligere Maalestok. (Kierkegaard 1843)

> Just as he has led others astray, so he, I think, will end by going astray himself. He has led others astray not in the external sense but the interior sense with respect to themselves. . . . I think he himself will have the same experience on an even more terrible scale. (Kierkegaard 1987, 308)

This is a very precise description of the scenario Blixen has prepared for Johann W. Cazotte in "Ehrengard," as well as another meta-narrative blow to Johannes's omnipotent status in "Forførerens Dagbog," and

the fact that Johannes actually gets away with playing with the Gods: "jeg som kan ansee mig for Gudernes Yndling" (Kierkegaard 1843) ["I, who can regard myself as a favorite of the gods" (Kierkegaard 1987, 334)]. But it is dangerous to play with the Gods, as Cazotte correctly observes in "Ehrengard": "But the generosity of the Gods was more alarming and astounding still . . . and dangerous for a mortal, even for an artist, to associate with" (Dinesen 1993b, 250–1). And this time Nemesis *does* strike, as we have seen it many times before in Blixen's works. Toward the end of the story, the baby child of Prince Lothar and Ludmilla is kidnapped by Matthias. He is the husband of the Lispeth, who is also the child's nurse. Ehrengard immediately sets out to find the kidnapper and eventually finds Matthias, Lispeth, and the little Prince at the loft of The Blue Boar Inn, and Johann W. Cazotte soon joins her. It is, of course, paramount that the child's identity is kept secret, so when questions arise about the nature of the conflict and the identity of the child, Ehrengard tells the party (even though her fiancée and future husband Kurt von Blittersdorff is standing right next to her) that the child is hers and Cazotte's. When uttering these crucial words, she is looking Johann W. Cazotte straight in the eyes, and, seconds after, his head turns crimson-red in a heavy blush. He is now himself becoming the victim of the emotional reaction he had planned for Ehrengard:

> At these words Herr Cazotte's blood was drawn upwards, as from the profoundest wells of his being, till it colored him all over like a transparent crimson veil. His brow and cheeks, all on their own, radiated a divine fire, a celestial, deep rose flame, as if they were giving away a long kept secret. And it was a strange thing that he should blush. For normally an onlooker in a *fauteil d'orchestre* would grow pale at seeing the irate hero of the stage suddenly turn upon him. (Dinesen 1993b, 276)

The big question is, of course: Why does the powerful and always composed Johann W. Cazotte blush at the idea that he should be the father of Ehrengard's child? Why does he not grow pale? Or why does he not laugh off Ehrengard's farfetched suggestion? The answer is: Through the idea that he should be the father of an actual child, Johann W. Cazotte becomes aware of physical sexuality, or rather the lack of it in his own life, since children don't come—as we all know—with the stork. Up until this crucial moment, the artist Johan W. Cazotte has not been a sexually active human being, but has instead been

sublimating all his sexual energy into the creation of divine and spiritual art, with the nude painting of Ehrengard as the diamond he was to set in his crown. Johann W. Cazotte blushes because he now knows that Ehrengard knows that he is a virgin, and that is—for a man of 45—a rather embarrassing revelation. This is exactly the "long kept secret" the blush gives away: "brow and cheeks . . . radiated a divine fire . . . as if they were giving away a long kept secret" (Dinesen 1993b, 276). The closing lines of the novella that describe Johann W. Cazotte's love affair in Rome succeeding the events at Schloss Rosenbad, supports the idea that a significant transformation of his nature has indeed taken place:

> A week later the betrothed couple were present at the baptism of the new-born Prince in the Dom of Babenhausen. . . . Herr Cazotte to the surprise of the court was not present at the ceremony. He had been called back to Rome to paint a portrait of the Pope. It was here, now, that he had that famous liaison with a cantatrice of the Opera which caused much talk and made his acquaintances smilingly alter his name to that of Casanova. (Dinesen 1993b, 276–7)

Johann W. Cazotte's blush in the final scene, in combination with the love affair in Rome, which causes his acquaintances to alter his name to that of Casanova, supports the interpretation that Johann W. Cazotte undergoes a crucial transformation succeeding his fatal blush at the loft at the Blue Boar Inn: from a spiritual seducer (an artist) to a physical seducer of flesh and blood (a Casanova).

"THE SECRET NOTE": THE KEY TO THE FINAL INTERPRETATION

A certain piece of biographical information about J. W. Goethe is crucial for the validation of this interpretation. Goethe did most likely not have a physical love relationship with a woman until his second journey to Italy 1786–88 when he was 39 years old. Goethe scholars have commonly acknowledged this since the publication of K. R. Eissler's *Goethe: A Psychoanalytic Study 1775–1786* in 1963, where Eissler states that

> [i]t seems—as I observed previously—that Goethe had sexual intercourse for the first time in his life during his second sojourn in Rome, after his return from Sicily. That he had intercourse in Rome can be proved; that it was for the first time is, of course beyond proof, but nevertheless an assumption of such high probability that I tend to consider it a certainty. (Eissler 1963, Vol. II, 1019)

Eissler assesses the event to have taken place close to the date of a decisive letter Goethe sends to Duke Karl August on February 16, 1788, describing his new experiences in the erotic (Eissler 1963, 1027–8), and Eissler concludes: "first intercourse at the age of thirty-nine" (Eissler 1963, 1031).

Danish Goethe scholar Per Øhrgaard and Danish Blixen and Goethe scholar Aage Henriksen both agree with Eissler:

> En omfattende psykoanalytisk studie over Goethe i de første Weimar-år (K.R. Eissler) mener, at Goethe ikke oplevede et fysisk fuldbyrdet forhold til en kvinde før under sit ophold i Rom i 1787–1788, og det forekommer trods al Sturm und Drang-følelsesfylde ikke usandsynligt. (Øhrgaard 1999, 73)
>
> (A thorough psychoanalytical study of Goethe in the first Weimar-years (K. R. Eissler) suggests that Goethe did not have a sexual relationship with a woman before his stay in Rome in 1787–1788 and despite all the Sturm und Drang emotions, it does not seem improbable.)

In the passage below, Aage Henriksen explains why Goethe denied himself a sexual relationship until he was almost 40 years old. Henriksen's explanation fits very well with the psychological constitution of the artist Johann W. Cazotte and the hidden plot in "Ehrengard":

> Der er tale om en erotisk karriere, som nok havde været umulig, hvis han ikke som adskillige kunstnere havde været sådan indrettet, at den letvakte, uforløste seksualitet steg op igennem ham og frigjorde syner og kunstneriske erkendelser. Dette forsagelsesprogram, i tiltagende grad utåleligt, holdt indtil midten af 1780'erne, hvor han flygtede fra sit gamle liv til sine længslers land, Italien . . . i sit praktiske liv foretog han en ændring, som under omstændig- hederne må kaldes radikal, idet han endelig frigav sin så længe bundne seksualitet. (Henriksen 2004, 103–4)
>
> (We are dealing with an erotic career, which would have most likely been impossible if he had not as most artists had a psychological makeup that allowed the easily awoken, yet unresolved sexuality, to rise through him and release visions and artistic recognitions. This type of renunciation, increasingly unbearable, prevailed until the mid 1780s when he escaped to the land of his longings, Italy. . . . [I]n his day-to-day life he carried out a change, which under the circumstances must be called radical since he finally released his latent sexuality.)

Shortly after returning from Rome, Goethe decided to follow the newfound path of physical sexuality he discovered in Italy, and—head over heels—began a sexual relationship with the 23-year-old Christiane Vulpius, who took the opportunity to ask for economic support for

her family. Shortly after their first meeting, she moved in with him (Øhrgaard 1999, 115). The role this small piece of biographical information about Goethe plays in "Ehrengard" is what Danish Blixen scholar Poul Behrendt calls "den hemmelige note" (the secret note). The secret note is a crucial piece of information that is impossible to detect in the text itself, but when (or rather, if) the reader discovers it, it changes the whole interpretation: "Den forandrer begivenheder radikalt, ikke ved at gribe ind i dem, men ved at ændre synspunktet på dem" (Behrendt 2007, 8) [it changes the events radically, not through direct interference, but because the view on the events is changed].

The above interpretation of the story propagating Goethe's sexual development as the key to the final interpretation of Cazotte's blush was validated during a visit to the Royal Library in Copenhagen in December 2010. In Capsule 133 in the Karen Blixen Archive, we find seven different versions of the Ehrengard novella: The first draft is most likely from the late summer or fall of 1952. It is titled "Forskrift," with Blixen's handwriting, but with no date,[8] two different re-writings from 1961 (one titled "Arbejdseksemplar" with a calendar sheet dating the draft to April 28, 1961), three different re-writings possibly from 1962 (at least two of them),[9] and the final manuscript with a few minor corrections made by Clara Selborn from 1963. In all of the versions up until the re-writings in 1962, the tale ends with this passage:

> He stayed in Rome for the same length of time as—fifty years earlier—his great namesake Johann Wolfgang Goethe. And at his return to Babenhausen he declared that the Eternal City had had exactly the same effect on his own genius as upon that of the poet. "But", the old lady concluded, "as unfortunately I am not an expert on Goethe, I cannot tell you exactly what that effect was." ("Ehrengard," first four drafts 1952–1961, Capsule 133, Royal Library in Copenhagen)

8. The earliest version of the manuscript at the Royal Library is not identical to the version that Blixen sent to Erik Clemmesen and Ellen Dahl in the summer of 1952. In a letter to Karen Blixen dated July 14, 1952, Erik Clemmesen writes: "Gartneren er vred—hvor er han dog vred!—Men hvor er det dog mærkeligt. Cazottes Forhold til de andre—han er baade indenfor og udenfor paa en Gang. Han har rigtig godt af, at han ikke kan faa Brug for de Miniaturemalerier senere hen—for han kan jo ikke sidde i Rom og male Prins Echo. Det er det bedste ved Prins Lothar,—at han kunne hitte paa det Navn"! [The gardener is angry—so angry!—But it is really curious. Cazotte's relationship to the others—he is both inside and outside at the same time. And he really deserves to not benefit from the miniatures later on—since he can't sit in Rome and paint Prince Echo. That is the best thing about Prince Lothar—that he could come up with such a name!]. Neither the gardener nor the miniatures or Prince Echo (the suggested name for Lothar and Ludmilla's son), as Clemmesen mentions in the letter, appear in the earliest manuscript we have at The Royal Library in Copenhagen. The earliest manuscript at The Royal Library must consequently be a rewriting of the first draft Blixen got back with comments from Clemmesen and Dahl in July 1952.

9. "Karen Blixen satte kun yderst sjældent dato og årstal på udkastene" (Selborn 2006, 62) [Blixen only very rarely put date and year on the drafts].

The above passage has been crossed over in the first revision from 1962, and in the second revision, from the same year, it has been changed to: "If I had really known," she said, "what kind of man Cazotte was," but then changed again in the third version from 1962, to the ending we know today:[10]

> It was here, now, that he had that famous liaison with a cantatrice of the Opera which caused much talk and made his acquaintances smilingly alter his name to that of Casanova. When the Grand Duchess heard of it she was upset. "I had really," she said, "during that time at Rosenbad, come to have such faith in Geheimrat Cazotte." (Dinesen 1993b, 277)

When reading the earliest, and now presumably lost, July 1952 version, Ellen Dahl is not sure what the Goethe allusion means (letter to Karen Blixen, July 18, 1952):

> Også for mig har den dunkle Punkter. Saaledes ved jeg ikke, skønt jeg netop er i færd med at læse en Bog om Goethe, hvor ogsaa den italienske Rejse og dens Indflydelse paa hans Produktion behandles, hvori denne falder sammen med Hr. Cazottes? (Blixen 1996, Vol. II, 94)
>
> (Also for me it has dim points. Thus, I don't know, even though I am just reading a book about Goethe where his journey to Italy and its influence on his production is also treated, how this coincides with Cazotte's?)

We do not know where Blixen got the idea of Goethe's arrested love life from as early as 1952, eleven years before Eissler's book came out. In Bondesson's register over the books in Blixen's library, we, however, find a book that could have led her on the track with regard to the plot and inspired her to write "Ehrengard."[11] In January 1952, Danish poet and close friend Thorkild Bjørnvig gave her Thomas Mann's book *Lotte in Weimar* (1939) in an English translation from 1948 (Bondesson 1982, 118). The dedication in the book dates the event to "Sletten d. 25 Januar, 1952" (Bondesson 1982, 119), which corresponds very well with the fact

10. Except for one small detail; Clara Selborn changed *Herr* Cazotte to *Geheimrat* Cazotte in her last revision in 1963 before the final print (manuscript in Capsule 133 at the Karen Blixen Archive at The Royal Library in Copenhagen).

11. Thanks to Ivan Ž. Sørensen and Ole Meyer for directing my attention to this important piece of information.

that Blixen started working on "Ehrengard" that very same spring. *Lotte in Weimar* is the story of Charlotte Kestner, who was the historical model for Goethe's character Lotte in his *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers* (1774; The Sorrows of Young Werther). In his novel, Thomas Mann creates a second meeting between them forty years after, when Charlotte comes to Weimar to try to settle things with Goethe regarding the unhappy love triangle that unfolded when they were both young. The book must have been a major source of inspiration for Blixen, even though we have to remember that Blixen's interest in Goethe emerged early and was already there when she wrote *Seven Gothic Tales* (in 1934), which contains another Goethe-parody: "The Poet." Clara Selborn also noted a strange Goethe/Italy-related incident at Rungstedlund as early as 1944: "Jeg husker det elegante og maleriske syn af Karen Blixen, i slacks og med stor havehat på, siddende med benene oppe i kaminsofaen, grangiveligt lignende et maleri af 'Goethe' i Italien" (Selborn 1974, 24) [I remember the elegant and picturesque sight of Karen Blixen wearing slacks and a big garden hat, sitting with her legs up on the fireplace couch, looking exactly like a painting of Goethe in Italy]. With these connections to Goethe in mind, it seems likely that Blixen put the pieces together herself regarding Goethe's love life and the role his second trip to Rome played, since she knew a lot about Goethe, artist psychology, sexual sublimation, and creativity.[12] Even though it is obvious that Goethe is one of the characters that Johann W. Cazotte is modeled after, no scholar has so far discovered this "secret note" about Goethe and the crucial role it plays for the interpretation of "Ehrengard."

JOHANN W. CAZOTTE AND THE COMIC

> *"You might call it," she wrote to the* Ladies' Home Journal *on June 25, 1962, "The Seducer's Diary"—which is, of course, a quotation from Kierkegaard, but which is here to be taken ironically and might give the reader an idea of the nature of the story."*
>
> —Langbaum 1964, 274

With the secret note in mind, we suddenly discover the irony in the title ("The Seducer's Diary") that Blixen proposes in the letter to

12. Georg Brandes does not mention anything about Goethe's sexuality in his Goethe biography from 1920. Ole Meyer and Poul Behrendt, however, believe it was common knowledge among scholars and writers with particular interest in Goethe at the time when Blixen wrote "Ehrengard," that Goethe was a virgin until his second trip to Italy (personal comments), even though Eissler was the first to publicly claim it in 1963.

the *Ladies' Home Journal*, and we suddenly understand "the nature of the story" as deeply comical on the part of Johannes the Seducer disguised in the narrative as Johan W. Cazotte. The comical lies in the inversion of common sexual practice for a middle-aged man and the great artist and seducer, who has not yet experienced physical love at the age of 45 and blushes like a young schoolboy when Ehrengard points him out as the father of her child. The inverted power roles between Ehrengard and Johann W. Cazotte also contribute to the comic since the supposedly weak character (Ehrengard), who we, up until the final scene, have thought to be in the hands of the great artist, suddenly outwits him, thus transforming the supposedly strong character of the story into the underdog. Another comical element in this final scene lies in the involuntariness of the blush. As Kierkegaard's character "*Det unge Menneske*" [The Young Man] correctly observes in "In vino veritas":

> I Henseende til det Uvilkaarlige er Modsigelsen oprindelig tilstede, som den: at man af et frit Fornuftvæsen ikke venter det Uvilkaarlige. Naar man saaledes antog, at Paven i det Øieblik han skulde sætte Kronen paa Napoleons Hoved kom til at hoste, eller at Brud og Brudgom i Vielsens høitidelige Øieblik kom til at nyse, saa viser det Comiske sig. Jo mere den givne Leilighed accentuerer det frie Fornuftsvæsen, desto mere comisk bliver det Uvilkaarlige. (Kierkegaard 1845)
>
> As for the involuntary, the contradiction is initially present: that we do not expect the involuntary from a free rational being. Suppose, for instance, that the pope started coughing the very moment he was about to place the crown on Napoleon's head or that in the solemn moment of exchanging vows the bride and bridegroom began to sneeze—the comic would be apparent. *The more the given occasion emphasizes the free rational being, the more comic the involuntarily becomes.* (Kierkegaard 1988, 41; emphasis added)

In this case, we see the older, rational, powerful artist, who has so far controlled the events, involuntarily lose control over the color of his face. Together with the sudden inversion of the power roles, it arguably places him in the category of the comical.

TURNING PALE: EHRENGARD AND THE TRAGIC

Johann W. Cazotte is obviously playing the comical role in the novella, but another fall that carries a tragic dimension also takes place in the final scene, even though it has so far been overlooked by scholars:

> To Ehrengard, too, something was happening as here she stood up straight, face to face with Kurt's straight figure. She too felt, in a new way, the depth of life. There was a sweetness in it which she till now had never known of, *there was a terrible sadness as well.* She would never have believed, had anybody told her, that to meet and part with Kurt von Blittersdorff could mean so much. The recognition at this moment was, she felt, the outcome of her stay at Rosenbad. (Dinesen 1993b, 274–5; emphasis added)

What Ehrengard in this moment discovers is the implications of Johann W. Cazotte's plan that despite marrying Kurt von Blittersdorff, she will forever be isolated and alienated in this relationship, since she, due to the machinations of Johann W. Cazotte, now possesses a deeper knowledge of the world (about how to manipulate and seduce) that she will never be able to communicate to Kurt. As the Plutarch quote, which is the motto for Kierkegaard's essay "Adskilligt om Ægteskabet mod Indsigelser" (Some Reflections on Marriage in Answer to Objections) in "In vino veritas" rightfully states: "Den Bedragne er visere end den Ikke-Bedragne" (Kierkegaard 1845); ("The deceived is wiser than one not deceived") (Kierkegaard 1988, 88). This also means that Johann W. Cazotte eventually gets from Ehrengard what he wants (her spiritual fall), but the physical manifestation turns out to be the opposite of what he had hoped for (the blush), when all the blood leaves her face and she turns deadly pale:

> Ehrengard had grown pale. . . . So colorless did her face become that the light in her eyes seemed dark in it, like two cavities. Then she turned and looked straight at Herr Cazotte. Under her glance the gentleman rose from the bed. The girl's glance was strong and direct, like an arrow's course from the bowstring to the target. In it she flung her past, present and future at his feet. . . . "It is he," she said. "Herr Cazotte is the father of my child." (Dinesen 1993b, 275–6)

Both Kierkegaard and Blixen work consciously with the physical reactions of "blushing" and turning "pale" as significant outer symbols of inner emotions. In "Ehrengard," the notion of "pale" is connected to intellectual and spiritual recognitions with tragic implications (which seems to be the case for most of her tales). Ehrengard turns pale, when she invites Johann W. Cazotte to come and paint her naked at the lake: "As she lifted her head . . . she was *a little pale*, but she spoke in a clear voice" (Dinesen 1993b, 257; emphasis added), which is also the case when she finally succeeds in seducing Cazotte at the loft: "Ehrengard had grown pale" (Dinesen 1993b, 275). Kurt also turns

"very pale" in the final scene when Ehrengard asks him to give up his love for her forever (Dinesen 1993b, 274). It is, however, the description of Ehrengard's face, "[s]o colorless did her face become that the light in her eyes seemed dark in it, like two cavities" (Dinesen 1993b, 275), resembling the skull of a dead human being that most directly points to the tragic implications of her newborn recognition and "the terrible sadness" that follows this fall—that when this higher level of reflection is born, something else in her dies. She will now forever be disconnected from her former naïve self and, more devastatingly, from her future husband Kurt. In the beginning of the novella, Ludmilla encourages Ehrengard to have a secret. She eventually gets it, but unfortunately with the wrong man:

> "Have you two ever had a secret together?" "Yes," Ehrengard again answered. "When the boys had done something bad, and I helped them to keep it from Papa." The Princess was silent, then suddenly exclaimed in a low voice: "Try to have a secret with him [Kurt]. Something that, in the whole world, only you and he know of. You will be feeling, then, that he is you and you are he. (Dinesen 1993b, 236–7)

Through the secrets that Ehrengard and Johann W. Cazotte share, that he has painted her naked at the lake every morning for a full week, that she invited him to do it and that he—the great seducer—is a virgin, he and she will forever be united because they will never be able to share these secrets with anyone else within the frame of this nineteenth-century environment. This is an ironic fulfillment of Ludmilla's description that "he is you and you are he," since it happened with the wrong man.

TRAGEDY AND GENDER

In a bold statement about woman and tragedy in Kierkegaard's "In vino veritas," Constantin Constantius concludes: "Gjører ligesaa kjære Drikkebrødre, og forstaaer nu Aristoteles. Han bemærker rigtigt, at kvinden ikke ret er brugbar i Tragoedien" (Kierkegaard 1845) ["Do likewise dear drinking companions, and then understand Aristotle. He makes the correct observation that woman is really not usable in tragedy" (Kierkegaard 1988, 54)]. In the final scene, Blixen seems to think the opposite of Constantin, when she lets Johann W. Cazotte blush and Ehrengard grow pale. Comedy, not tragedy, is the privilege of *man*, in this case, Johann W. Cazotte, and tragedy the privilege of *woman*, in this case, Ehrengard. This brings us back to a crucial

sentence in the beginning of the novella, where a double movement of the story is indicated, but never taken up again: "So to begin with, my dearest, I shall inform you that the stage of *our little comedy or tragedy* was the lovely country and the fine city of Babenhausen" (Dinesen 1993b, 215–6; emphasis added). The Old Lady never elaborates on the story as being either "a comedy or a tragedy," but the logical answer to this question is, as we understand from the final scene, that the story is *both*, depending on which one of the main protagonists we are considering. In Blixen's world, comedy is viewed as the divine poetic contradiction of life, and tragedy is the only way to achieve a deeper and more profound relation to life. Blixen reserves comedy for the "Gods," in this case, the God-like figures in her tales, which in almost all cases are men: Rosendaal in "Carnival," "The Councilor" in "The Poet," Prince Potenziani in "The Roads Around Pisa," The Uncle in "Sorrow-Acre," Mr. Clay in "The Immortal Story," and Johann W. Cazotte here in "Ehrengard." These seemingly omnipotent lords, artists, and businessmen are often sexually impotent, which is exactly the comic contradiction. In Blixen's world, tragedy, on the other hand, is the exclusive privilege of common people and women. Examples are plenty: Polly in "Carnival," Agnese in "The Roads Around Pisa," Anne-Marie in "Sorrow-Acre," Miss Virginie in "The Immortal Story," Malli in "Tempest," and, of course, Ehrengard, to mention a few. Both comedy and tragedy are closely connected to Blixen's idea of nemesis. Comedy is the nemesis of the privileged (which includes men) and tragedy is the nemesis of the common people (which includes women). This is a consistent juxtaposition throughout Karen Blixen's production.

This interpretation of the two roles concerning the comic and the tragic is supported when examining the developments of the two characters in the various drafts of "Ehrengard" at The Royal Library in Copenhagen. Johann W. Cazotte's birthday is changed from the "twenty-first of May" to "first of April, a true fool" in the revisions following the first draft, sharpening the comical aspect of his character. In the first draft we also find the crucial passage about Ehrengard's transformation in the last scene to be much less tragic compared to the final version: "She would not have believed, had anybody told her so, that to part with Kurt von Blittersdorff could mean such a *strange physical sadness*." This passage is subsequently changed to the much stronger: "there was a *terrible sadness* as well" (Dinesen 1993b, 275; emphasis added in both passages), as we know it from the final version. The tragic element of the Alpen-Glühen phenomenon in connection

to Ehrengard's fall was also sharpened. The passage "black night will follow" is missing from the Alpen-Glühen passage in the first version, but later added as the tragic contours of Ehrengard's character became clearer for Blixen (Dinesen 1993b, 234). Together with the deliberate cover up of "the secret note" about Goethe, these are the major changes Karen Blixen made to the novella during the many revisions. If she had kept the obvious Goethe allusion in the closing lines, the novella would have become too light and jokey, pushing the allusions to "Forførerens Dagbog" and the tragic elements with regard to Ehrengard too much in the background. Blixen was also adamant that the tales intended for magazine publication should in no way be second-rate (Selborn 1974, 45, 61), proudly following the motto of Babette from "Babette's Feast":[13] "Through all the world there goes one long cry from the heart of the artist: Give me leave to do my utmost!" (Dinesen 1993a, 59), which is another reason for why she had to hide the comical Goethe allusion, so she would not jeopardize the serious elements and her own artistic standards with regard to this, her last, magazine story.

THE NAMES: AUTHORIAL DOUBLE IRONY

Karen Blixen's use of puns is for the most part inspired by one of her favorite authors, William Shakespeare.[14] Henri Bergson defines the pun as a sentence or utterance where "two different sets of ideas are expressed, and we are confronted with only one series of words" (Augarde 2003, 205). In "Ehrengard," Blixen uses a special variation of the pun: the homophonic pun. A homophone is defined as one of two or more words, such as "night" and "knight" that are pronounced the same but differ in meaning, origin, and sometimes spelling. When choosing the names in "Ehrengard," Blixen had an astute eye for their hidden homophonic qualities with regard to the English, Danish, and German pronunciations. When we analyze the hidden homophonic qualities of the names, the Old Lady's introduction suddenly becomes loaded with a deep underlying irony created on the level of the author:

> I am not going to give you the real name of this country, nor of the ladies and gentlemen within my tale. . . . I shall inform you that the

13. Published before "Ehrengard" as a magazine story in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in June 1950 (Langbaum 1964, 248).

14. Shakespeare's extensive use of sexual puns is described in Rubinstein (2003).

> stage of our little comedy or tragedy was the lovely country and fine city of Babenhausen, and that you will be devoting your attention to a chronicle of the Grand Ducal house of Fugger-Babenhausen. And as in the course of my narrative new gentlemen and ladies make their appearance in it, I shall endeavor to find a new *noble* name for each of them. (Dinesen 1993b, 215–6; emphasis added)

It is not just the names of the characters but also the names of cities and places that turn out to be anything but "noble" when analyzing their homophonic qualities. The Grand Ducal house *Fugger-Babenhausen* becomes saucy "Fucker-Babe-n-hausen" when pronounced in English. We also find Ludmilla to be from the princely house of *Leuchtenstein*. *Leucht* means "bright" in German, but when pronounced in Danish, the word sounds like *lugt*, meaning "smell," and as we see in this passage, it is obviously on the level of the author meant to have a clear sexual connotation:

> Within the cluster of Leuchtenstein maidens the artist had *scented* a quality of unconscious seductiveness, that rose-like fullness and fragrance which guilelessly allured the passer-by to pick the flower. (Dinesen 1993b, 222; emphasis added)

We also find Ehrengard's father, General von Schreckenstein, to be "first married to a von Kniphausen and by her had five sons" (Dinesen 1993b, 228). *Knip* sounds like *knep* in Danish, which is the short form of the infinitive *kneppe* (slang for sexual intercourse), and the young couple must indeed have been very active since they had five sons. The first part of Ehrengard's name, *Ehre*, means "honor" in German and Danish (*ære*) and the second part *gard* is a homophone on the English word "guard." When combining the Danish and English sounds, Ehrengard's name means "Guard of Honor." If we also take a closer look at Ehrengard's last name, von Schreckenstein, *schreck* means *skræk* in Danish ("terror" in English) and the German *von* means "from" in English. This means that Ehrengard's full name, when combining the words and sounds from Danish and English, means *The Guard of Honor from the Area of Terror*. The joke here is, of course, that this *area of terror* is bodily female sexuality (embodied by the young maiden of Ehrengard), which is the only area that the great Johann W. Cazotte has so far not dared entering. In the novella we also find the young nurse's name to be Lispeth with a *p*, instead of the b we normally find in the Danish name, and this is obviously a homophonic pun on "pet,"

since she is nursing and petting the child (Clara Selborn changed this name to Lisbeth in the Danish version[15]).

The ironical and astute twist in the tale with regard to these names is that they are in fact historically correct, for example, Fugger-Babenhausen, Kniphausen, Leuchtenstein, Schreckenstein, and Ehrengard.[16] The Old Lady is using the names to protect the historical persons in her tale, while Blixen behind her back is using them as homophonic sexual puns. But since the names are, in fact, real names of German nobility, Karen Blixen could—tongue in cheek—fence off any possible accusations regarding the saucy and sexual content of the names, since they are, in fact, historically correct, and then, why would they be vulgar?

KIERKEGAARD AND THE SECRET NOTE

The fact that Blixen chose a female name ending in *gard*, when dealing with a work by Kierke*gaard* is also not a coincidence. *Gard*, *gaard*, and *guard* are homophones when pronounced in English, and when we combine the Danish and English meanings of the two words *Kierke* and *gard*, it means "Guard of The Church" (Christianity). This stands out as a significant contrast to the connotations of Ehrengard's name "The Guard of Honor from the Area of Terror" (female sexuality). In the 1953 edition of the selected diary entries *Søren Kierkegaards dagbøger* (Rohde 1953), we find this quote on the first page before the introduction:

> Efter min Død skal Ingen i mine Papirer (det er min Trøst) finde en eneste Oplysning om hvad der egentlig har udfyldt mit Liv; finde den Skrift i mit Inderste, der forklarer Alt, og som ofte gjør hvad Verden vilde kalde Bagateller til uhyre vigtige Begivenheder for mig, og hvad jeg anseer for Ubetydelighed, naar jeg tager den hemmelige Note bort, der forklarer det. (Rohde 1953, 6)[17]

> After my death no one will find in my papers (this is my consolation) the least information about what has *really* filled my life, find *that* script in my innermost being that explains everything, and which often, for

15. Clara Selborn's Danish translation in Capsule 133 in the Blixen Archive at The Royal Library in Copenhagen.

16. Ehrengard Melusine Baroness von der Schulenburg, Duchess of Kendal and Duchess of Munster (1667–1743) is a historical person.

17. The title of Poul Behrendt's book *Den hemmelige note* (The secret note) is inspired by this quote (Behrendt 2007, 7).

> me, makes what the world would call trifles into events of immense importance, and which I too consider of no significance once I take away the secret note that explains it. (Kierkegaard 2008, 157)

This 1953 edition is to be found in the collection of books in Karen Blixen's Library (Bondesson 1982, 344), and it came into her possession while working on "Ehrengard" (1952–62). When counting in the secret note about Goethe as being a virgin up until his journey to Italy, the sexual content of the novella and the hidden homophonic meaning of Kierkegaard's name, it seems plausible that Blixen on the level of the author in "Ehrengard" also suggests that Kierkegaard was a virgin ("Guard of The Church") but—contrary to Goethe—stayed so for his whole life. There is nothing—neither in his own diary entries or in the biographies so far written—that indicates that Kierkegaard ever had a sexual relationship with a woman, and it seems likely, with Blixen's insight into Goethe's late-blooming physical sexuality and knowledge about artist sublimation, that this was also Blixen's interpretation of Kierkegaard's "secret note." In a letter to Aage Henriksen from July 29, 1953, while she was working on "Ehrengard," she mentions that they have discussed Søren Kierkegaard's body and his secret:

> Jeg vil gerne bemærke at jeg aldrig har sagt eller tænkt mig, at "Hemmeligheden ved S.K. var hans ubehagelige Krop",—det er langt fra mig at paatage mig nogen Forklaring af S.K. eller hans Hemmelighed. Min Udtalelse skulde kun forklare, hvorfor det "personlige Forhold til S.K.", som jeg gennem Deres Bog paa en Maade følte at være kommet til, altid maa forblive *noget* fjernt eller afmaalt. Jeg kunde jo falde Shakespeare om Halsen og kysse Heine,—men jeg vilde, i denne Forstand,—allerhøjst i uhyggelig Grad falde S.K. for Brystet,—ja, undskyld et dumt Ordspil! (Blixen 1996, Vol. II, 150)
>
> (I would like to note that I have never said or thought that the "The secret about S. K." was his unpleasant body—it is not within my limits to take upon me any explanation of S. K. or his secret. My remark was only supposed to explain, why the "personal relationship to S. K.," which I have felt in a way through your book, always will stay *something* distant or formal. I could throw myself in the arms of Shakespeare and kiss Heine—but I would, in that sense—at the very utmost be an offense to S. K.—to use a silly pun!)

In the letter, Blixen uses an indirect message to describe her relation to Kierkegaard, which is also delivered in the shape of a pun: "falde S.K. for Brystet." This sentence literally means: "fall to his chest" but originally refers to an uncomfortable feeling of pressure on the chest

caused by bad air or smoke. In a metaphorical sense, it however means "to be offended by" something or someone. Blixen uses the pun on one level to describe her lack of erotic attraction to Kierkegaard as a contrast to the erotically loaded descriptions of her relationship to Shakespeare and Heine: "throw myself in the arms of Shakespeare" and "kiss Heine." On another level she uses the pun to describe her own humorous approach to the erotic, which she also has in common with Shakespeare and Heine, but which she is convinced would be an offense to Kierkegaard. As Sørensen correctly observes in this passage dealing with Blixen's approach to humor in relation to Kierkegaard:

> En mere afgørende anstødssten for Kierkegaard ville dog være, at for Blixen er humoren "det højeste", hvor den for Kierkegaard befinder sig på et stadium "før" det religiøse, før troen, før kristendommen. (Sørensen 2002, 153)
>
> (A more decisive stumbling block for Kierkegaard would be the fact that for Blixen humor is "the highest," where it for Kierkegaard is situated on a level "before" the religious, before faith, before Christianity.)

Kierkegaard was very clever with regard to protecting his own legacy, which means that we will never know for sure what this "secret note" was about, or if there was any secret at all, and that that is, in fact, the secret, as Poul Behrendt points out as a possible interpretation (Behrendt 2007, 7). But in this humorous novella dealing with two male giants of world literature—Goethe and Kierkegaard—Blixen for certain seems to indicate that the secret note behind their success as artists and philosophers was sexual sublimation. She is also unable to hide that she finds this contrast between spiritual omnipotence and physical impotence in a man to be highly comic—even emasculating. As Sørensen correctly observes with regard to Blixen and her view on humor:

> *Den store Humor* hedder Høffdings berømte værk fra 1916, hvori han—inspireret af, men også i polemik med Kierkegaard—hævder humorens førsteplads i en verdslig, anstændig og ansvarsbevidst livsanskuelse. Og der er ingen tvivl om at Blixen står ved hans side når han fastslår: "Den store Humor vil være forbunden med en stadig Søgen og staar i Modsætning til al dogmatisk Visdom, hvad enten den optræder i den sunde Menneskeforstands, Videnskabens eller Religionens Navn." (Sørensen 2002, 155)
>
> (*The Great Humor* is the name of Høffding's most famous work from 1916, where he—inspired by, but also in contention with Kierkegaard—claims the supreme status of humor in a profane, decent, and responsible view of life. And there is no doubt that Blixen is on his

side when he establishes: "The great humor will be connected to a continuous quest in opposition to all dogmatic insight, whether that be in the name of healthy common sense, science or religion.")

In her last big opus—"Ehrengard"—Blixen certainly upheld this ideal and leaves a legacy as one of the great humorists of world literature.[18]

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